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THE BATTLE OVER "RIGHT-TO-WORK"

—John C. Cort

THE

Commonweal

TRADE, AID AND THE FARMER

by Martin E. Schirber
and
Emerson Hynes

ART AND THE BOXOFFICE

by Walter Kerr

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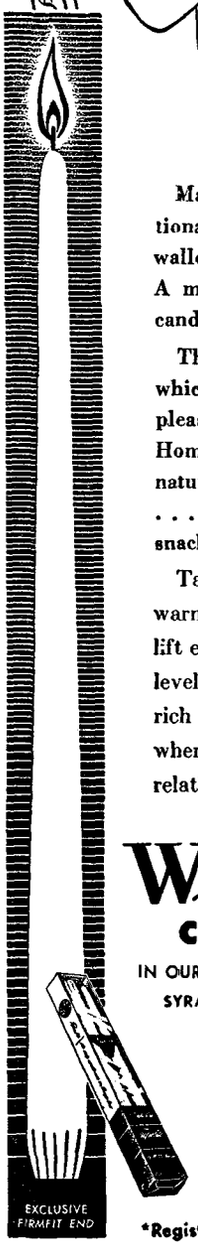

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The Commonweal

week by week

PUPIL OR SCHOOL?

THERE is one question on which we find ourselves greatly at odds with certain American journals of a normally sympathetic bent of opinion. We would, generally speaking, be at one on such issues as racial discrimination and segregation, support for the UN, political demagogues, defense of the traditional American liberties, effective resistance to Communism, immigration policy, preventive war, social security and many other matters involving various domestic and foreign policies.

But our own views on an important school question do not lie within the general area of agreement, although this question itself is vitally related to the preservation of America's democratic freedoms. It has to do with the nation's parochial schools, or, rather, with the boys and girls attending these schools. The extent of our differences is highlighted by two recent editorial comments on the recent Belgian demonstrations against changes in that nation's present school law. These comments betray both little understanding of the Belgian situation and an overeagerness to reach out for a cudgel to belabor the idea of any state aid for parochial school children in the United States.

The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch,* which from time to time carries excerpts from The Commonweal on its editorial page, heads its comment: "Bitter Lesson from Belgium." In the course of its remarks it brings in the Perón government's charges against Catholic school authorities in Argentina. The main burden of the argument is that state aid to denominational education inevitably leads to disturbances. That is "one reason why no steps should be taken, however small and well-intentioned, that will lead to a church-state struggle in the United States."

On this basis the *Post-Dispatch* then proceeds to urge its readers to reject the state school bus bill proposed by Representative Jennie Walsh of St. Louis, which would provide needed transportation for Missouri parochial school children—and, strangely enough, to reject it "in the interests of continued religious freedom for all."

The *Christian Science Monitor* actually characterizes auxiliary services like bus transportation as "subsidies" to parochial schools at "taxpayers' expense." It then cites the difficulties the police encountered in Brussels. Here is the editorial's conclusion: "If this is the kind of pressure encountered when a people's elected representatives conclude subsidies have gone too far, can it be wondered at that American non-Catholics balk at opening the door at all to a breakdown of the constitutional separation of church and state."

FIRST, as to the minor part of this dispute. The one-day demonstration that Belgian Catholics staged against revision of the education laws is a time-honored practice in Europe generally, and particularly in Belgium, where the Socialist minority went to even greater lengths against King Leopold five years ago. The current demonstration would have been far less disorderly had it not been for the provocative tactics of the Socialist-Liberal government and of the thousands of extra police that government poured in to prevent a popular demonstration.

Finally, there is more at stake than the cutting of $5,000,000 from the annual subvention to the Catholic schools, which incidentally enroll a majority of that nation's school children. The proposed legislation in effect also seeks to do away with local control of Belgian schools in favor of the (currently anti-Catholic) central government. All this was ample reason for resort to the traditional means of popular demonstration.

As far as American school children are concerned, the major issue is quite different: Are these children who attend recognized schools in compliance with our compulsory education laws entitled or not to certain auxiliary services? If their parents in the exercise of their constitutional rights, as confirmed by the Supreme Court de-

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cision in the Oregon schools case, send their children to non-public schools in obedience to their personal convictions, are these children to be deprived of services the state provides for others?

Should not the services of public health nurses be available for all American school children? Must pupils in non-public schools court the dangers of the highways because no provision has been made for their transportation? Is there any valid reason for not permitting these children to benefit from the Department of Agriculture's surplus food school lunch program?

For us these would all be rhetorical questions. A convincing case against the provision of these basic services for all American school children is exceedingly difficult to demonstrate *per se*. There is really quite another reason the slogan about separation of church and state (and the historically untenable "impenetrable wall" theory) is trotted out whenever there is public discussion of these matters. Apart from all prejudice and bigotry it is because many non-Catholics in this country genuinely fear that such services would constitute a "foot in the door," that the next step would be to ask for state support for parochial schools.

EXIT MR. CORSI

WE are forced by the unfolding of the Corsi affair to give all concerned in the matter a certain grudging kind of credit. Three months ago Edward J. Corsi was hired as a special assistant to Secretary Dulles to assist in the administration of the lagging Refugee Relief Act. Now he has been dismissed. Within that short space of time a thoroughgoing mess has been made out of the entire business.

For weeks before Mr. Corsi's fall, Democratic Congressman Walter of Pennsylvania carried on public war against him, branding him a security risk because of alleged past associations with Communist front groups. Mr. Corsi just as strenuously entered a blanket denial of the charges. Since Representative Walter is one of the authors of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act, of which Mr. Corsi is a well known critic (along with Mr. Eisenhower, distinguished members of both political parties, and many religious groups), he can hardly be considered a completely dispassionate judge.

The Administration now insists that security was not an issue in the Corsi affair, and the fact that Mr. Dulles offered Mr. Corsi another State Department post in a politically less stormy area apparently confirms this. Yet surely it should have been possible to resolve the security question more satisfactorily in this case. The charges made against Mr. Corsi should have been dealt with. Mr. Dulles did not stand up for his special assistant when he was under attack, and the net effect of Mr. Corsi's dismissal is to leave him under a cloud of vague, never dispelled, security charges. If they were without substance, that fact should have been stated publicly. And if, on the other hand, Representative Walter was right, Mr. Corsi should not have been offered another important job in the State Department.

As things stand now, America has been dealt another blow abroad. Mr. Corsi's dismissal will give additional ammunition to those who make anti-U.S. propaganda out of the discriminatory features in our national immigration policy. And those at home who would rectify inequities in our immigration laws may now find their task much harder; in the public mind critics of the immigration laws are likely to be equated unjustly with subversives and security risks.

From a political point of view, the dismissal of Mr. Corsi offends an important segment of important Republicans and weakens Mr. Eisenhower in New York, a key state. Mr. Corsi is well known in New York Republican circles; a former candidate for the Senate, he ran for Mayor of New York City on the GOP ticket a few years ago, and until very recently he was Governor Dewey's industrial commissioner.

NEXT WEEK

JOHN C. OLIN writes about the French Christian Democratic Party, the MRP, and its policy crisis.

"Since 1948 the MRP had emphasized its European program and by mid-1954 it appeared to have little save this ideology and this promise to offer France. Nearly every solution or explanation was made in terms of the basic policy of constructing Europe. Etienne Borne, the party's chief intellectual at the May Congress analyzed the MRP's course of action of the last ten years, its full lifespan, in terms of its European policy. Here was one of the party's great revolutionary ideals and the only one which had achieved some degree of realization. Only too conscious of the frustrating reappearance of the Third Republic in the guise of the Fourth and of the 'drift to the right' which had carried the MRP along with it, Borne held aloft the building of Europe as a test of fidelity, a measure of progress, and a compensation for other disappointments. . . ."

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From the point of view of employees in the State Department, the Corsi affair must have given them all pause. If this man could be thrown to the wolves, who in the department imagines that Mr. Dulles will fight for him? The moral of the affair is made even more striking if one considers the fact that Mr. Corsi was an active campaigner for Mr. Dulles when the present Secretary of State ran for the Senate a few years ago. And if anyone imagines that the treatment given to Mr. Corsi will make it easier to recruit men for government appointments in the future, he must live in a dream world.

All in all, any way you look at it, the Corsi affair was hardly a model of governmental administration. This is not even a case in which principle had to yield to "practical" politics, for the action in this matter was neither principled nor practical. Mr. Corsi has been treated unfairly. The U.S. cause abroad has been dealt a considerable blow, the morale of government employees has been weakened, and Mr. Eisenhower's personal prestige has been hurt in an important state. Accomplishing any one of these results would seem a large task, yet Mr. Dulles and advisers managed them all in ninety days. We doubt that many departments of the government could match that record, and we hope that none of them try.

QUEMOY, MATSU, AND PUBLIC OPINION

IT is possible and profitable to watch public opinion change. First there will be a "leak" from the Government, or a planted statement, or a letter to the *Times*. The theme is then developed in the important columns and in editorials. Stories attributed to ghostly entities, highly placed in unidentified offices, appear in the press. Nothing *official* has happened, but a problem has been posed, a solution put forward by one person or by several people, seized upon by others, and the framework of discussion can be seen to have quietly been altered.

And so it happened on the question of whether Quemoy and the Matsus are to be defended. At first it was strongly argued that the United States had to defend the islands. When opinion began to divide on the wisdom of that course, an advocate of their defense, Admiral Carney, tried a reliable ploy: he held an off-the-record dinner. But the ploy plonked. Public reaction was sharply against fighting for the islands. The President, deeply reluctant to order military action, rebuked the Admiral. The opponents of defending the islands spoke more confidently, Mr. Arthur Dean's article on the "two-China" theory appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, Adlai Stevenson spoke out against defending the islands, and the tide of discussion clearly had turned.

The President does not want to fight for the islands. Weeks ago he tried to arrange a *de facto* ceasefire and China rejected the idea. Mr. Dulles is now working to obtain a guarantee of Formosa from our principal allies which could be announced at the same time that we announced that we would not defend Quemoy and Matsu. This arrangement can probably be made—if China does not force the American public opinion to a more abrupt decision.

GENOCIDE CONVENTION

LAST November the National Council of Catholic Women held its annual convention in Boston. At that time delegates to the convention passed a series of resolutions on international affairs—resolutions which were outstanding for their understanding of the problems involved and which clearly reflected the spirit of papal pronouncements on peace and international order. The ink was hardly dry on the resolutions, however, before some Catholic publications loosed a barrage of criticism, much of it obviously the result of a deep animus against the UN and anything connected with it.

Among the resolutions passed by the NCCW convention, for example, was one urging that the Genocide Convention be resubmitted to the United States Senate for consideration. This proposal in particular drew heavy fire from hostile critics, and for this reason some recent remarks by Cardinal Mooney of Detroit are particularly apropos at this time.

Commending the Detroit delegates for having supported the resolution on genocide, Cardinal Mooney said he felt they had acted with "prudence and commendable Catholic vision." Not that Cardinal Mooney considers the Genocide Convention an ideal statement. "It is, in fact, a weak document that provides for no internationally enforceable sanctions," he said. "But it is the best that could be obtained in an admittedly confused and imperfect world society. It is, therefore, better than nothing."

In taking the course they had, Cardinal Mooney said, the delegates "found themselves in accord with the attitudes of the Holy See as set forth in many recent documents and particularly in the address of Pope Pius XII to the Italian Catholic Jurists in December 1953. It is easy to find in

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the pronouncements and actions of Pius XII a qualified approval of the United Nations organization and its various agencies as the best that is attainable in our ideologically and religiously divided world of today." For all its faults, Cardinal Mooney said, "we may well welcome even a diffident and halting step like the Genocide Convention as a preparation for what the Pope, in another context, calls for—a definite 'international code of criminal law.' " Ratification of the Genocide Convention, Cardinal Mooney said, will let the racial, ethnic, and religious groups behind the Iron Curtain know that we have not forgotten them. "It will inspire them to continue their moral resistance to entrenched tyranny which, for the moment, cannot be dethroned from the outside short of a war that would bring utter ruin to them as well as to their oppressors."

It would be expecting too much, perhaps, to anticipate that these reasoned sentiments by Cardinal Mooney will put an end to the sniping at the National Council of Catholic Women. But for those whose hackles do not rise at the mere thought of the UN, the Cardinal's words will come as a wise and welcome contribution on an important subject.

THE BANDUNG CONFERENCE

REPRESENTATIVES of more than half the world's population are meeting this week in an obscure Indonesian town. What are they to discuss? World tensions, with particular attention to colonialism, the Asian cold war, and the problems of the newly independent peoples of Asia and Africa. There is, at this writing, no more specific agenda, and no one seems to know quite what is supposed to happen there in that obscure Indonesian town. The big thing is that representatives of half the world's population, virtually all of them colonial subjects of the great powers one decade ago, are meeting to discuss the problems of the world; and the rest of the world, the great Western powers in particular, watches this ex-colonial conference with interest and concern.

This half of the world's population includes, of course, China, a totalitarian dictatorship intimately associated with the Soviet Empire. It includes the Communist satellite government of North Viet Nam. Both will be at the meeting, and will be the focus of interest.

The Bandung conference will be something of a test for China. Its great opportunity at this conference will also be its great temptation. If China is prudent, as it was prudent at Geneva, it may walk off with a major propaganda achievement. Much of Asia would prefer to believe the best of present-day China, and with a little cooperation from Chinese officials will feel—uneasily—justified in that preference. But China will not have the conference to itself. The South Vietnamese government will be represented, the Filipinos, Pakistanis and Ceylonese will be there, and all are anti-Communist. Governments will be represented there which have the gravest kind of reservations about Chinese policies, even though they also have the gravest criticisms to make of Western policies: India and Burma. If China attempts to bully the conference, or if it launches military action against Quemoy or Matsu while the conference is under way, or if the powerful Indonesian Communist party should attempt a show of strength as counterpoint (or intimidation) to the conference, there probably will be a revulsion against the Communists. But the latter two possibilities are cures worse than the Chinese propaganda victory they might prevent. It might also happen that China would fail to show deference to its neighbors; the Indians would then be tempted to put them in their place. Neither Mr. Nehru nor Premier Nu of Burma intends to be bullied.

This conference is an inevitable sort of thing. The new nations of the world want their place in the sun; they will get it, and if it seems to them that the West, and the United States in particular, opposes their progress then they will make friends where they find them. China may be a totalitarianism, but it is an Asian totalitarianism, and after two hundred years experience with Western racialism and colonialism blood looks to many in South Asia and even in Africa to be thicker than water.

The most dangerous mistake the United States can make in its relations with Southeast Asia is to continue to treat the governments of that region as if they were well-intentioned but not altogether bright. There is nothing so intolerable as to be tolerated. Mr. Dulles has sometimes permitted the hint of patronization to enter into his discussions of Asia. Well, the Bandung nations are not going to suffer patronization.

The West should consider the results of the Bandung conference with the utmost seriousness. Authentic Asian democratic opinion will there be in a mixed measure of cooperation and competition with Communism. What happens will perhaps tell us more about our own policies than a pack of analyses made in the shade of the Capitol in Washington.

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Trade, Aid and the Farmer

"THE POSTWAR DECADE OF RECONSTRUCTION IS OVER, AND WE ARE NOW CALLED UPON FOR A NEW TYPE OF WORLD LEADERSHIP"

MARTIN E. SCHIRBER and
EMERSON HYNES

THE contrast between the policies of the past decade and those of the ten years following World War I is most striking. The twenties saw the rejection of the League of Nations in a wave of shallow isolationism, the pious faith in paper disarmament and pacts of peace, the hard-boiled "they-hired-the-money-didn't-they?" international monetary policy and enthusiastic support for ever higher tariffs.

In comparison with that era of unenlightened nationalism, the past decade has been one of economic maturity. Historians will be hard pressed to find a parallel of a victorious nation which engineered reconstruction so efficiently and generously for both her allies and conquered enemy as has the United States. Despite some blunders and hurried improvisations, the international policy turned out to be imaginative and canny. It worked. Our prodigious productive power and organizational ability were unleashed for the relief and rebuilding of other nations; full employment was maintained at home; Communism was contained and our military power strengthened.

It is true that some of the military and diplomatic endeavors were reluctantly undertaken, but in the field of economic policy the record is one of positive and sustained leadership. Either alone or in conjunction with the UN we initiated UNRRA, FAO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Marshall Plan, Point Four, ECA, and similar programs, to say nothing of private relief efforts such as CARE and the NCWC War Relief Services. From 1946 to 1953 the net economic aid given to foreign countries by our government totaled $33 billion, while military aid amounted to another $8 billion; and expenditures for the Mutual Security program for 1954 and 1955 will add another $9 billion. These grants, appropriated with only minor dissent, stand in marked contrast with the mere $11 billion of war debts which became the subject of such acrid controversy in the thirties.

Father Martin E. Schirber, O.S.B., is head of the Economics department and professor of agricultural economics at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Emerson Hynes is professor of rural sociology at the same university.

Moreover, as a result of the continued reduction in duties and the general rise in prices, the average level of our tariff is now so low that other countries would profit less by further reduction than they would from simplification of our customs procedure and from assurance that we will not invoke the escape clause of the Trade Agreements Act against imports which show signs of becoming competitive. We have also sought to conduct our foreign trade relations in an orderly and efficient manner by cooperating with the thirty-four nations which are participating in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Although Congress has not yet given formal approval to the GATT, American delegates took part in drafting the original agreement and have made use of the organization provided by GATT for the orderly negotiation of trade agreements with other countries.

IT is true that it has been relatively easy for the United States to show such magnanimity in international affairs. Our countryside and cities escaped the devastation of war, and our problem today is one of overproduction and abundance. In 1954 our agricultural surpluses increased by $1.3 billion to an all-time high of $7.4 billion.

But now that the free world has reached and surpassed its prewar level of production, the time for outright grants has come to an end. To foreign producers who are back on their feet, such generosity is hardly distinguishable from dumping. Thus the National Cattle Breeding Association in Spain and its associated industries have branded the donation of powdered milk to Spanish children as disastrous to the sale of their milk products. And the recent offer of 10 million pounds of butter (out of our present hoard of butter—255 million pounds) on a competitive-bid basis brought howls of protest from butter-exporting countries. Meanwhile, many other countries are holding their breaths for fear that the competitive-bid idea will spread to the remaining $7 billion worth of surplus commodities held by the Commodity Credit Corporation.

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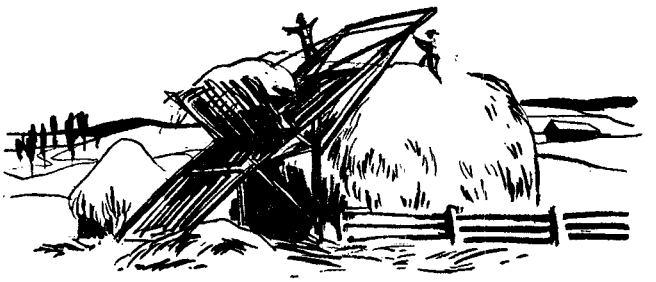
Even the more orderly methods of surplus disposal exemplified by the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act have brought protests from competing exporters and from producers in importing countries. This act, which was passed in 1954 with the unanimous support of all farm groups, renews and extends the authority of the Mutual Security Act to permit the sale of a maximum of $700 million worth of surplus agricultural commodities abroad for foreign currencies over the next three years, and the outright donation of up to $300 million worth of commodities for famine or other emergency relief, and similar purposes.

While such sales are made only under agreement with the governments of importing countries and care is taken not to disrupt the ordinary channels of trade, the program has been branded as dumping by some exporting nations and accepted with obvious lack of enthusiasm by others. Thus Burma and Thailand have complained that our new-found method of scattering largesse abroad is raising havoc with their export markets for rice; and the subcommittee on trade of the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, while expressing appreciation for economic aid, has gently suggested that the normal flow of trade between countries in that part of the world could be "seriously disturbed."

Thus the United States is clearly at the crossroads as regards foreign economic policy. The postwar decade of reconstruction is over, and we are now called upon for a new type of world leadership. That this is recognized by the President is evident from his January 10 message to Congress: "The nation's enlightened self-interest and sense of responsibility as a leader among the free nations require a foreign economic program that will stimulate economic growth in the free world through enlarging opportunities for the fuller operation of the forces of free enterprise and competitive markets."

THE most direct and obvious way in which we can at this stage help to increase the economic strength of the free world is by stepping up the productivity of all countries falling under this designation. This can be accomplished most effectively by furnishing them with the modern tools of production and technical know-how. In some areas the greatest need may be for an all-steel plow; other countries may require textile machinery, mining equipment, or a cement plant. In any case, increasing productivity abroad means increased foreign investment and expansion of our Technical Assistance program. That private investment is seeking outlets abroad is evident from the interest shown at the recent Inter-American Investment Conference at New Orleans. On the other hand, greater investment in foreign countries will entail the admission of a growing volume of imports with which debtor nations will wish to pay the interest and principal of their loans.

More imperative at the present time is the need of reversing the world-wide trend toward subsidization of exports and quantitive restrictions on imports. Almost every country has a number of pampered



industries which they try to protect. For instance, in the case of wheat alone, with the world price (without allowing for transportation) about $1.70, the support price in Chile is $4.50, in Uruguay $2.96, in France $2.64, in the United States $2.25, while England pays a producer-subsidy of sixty cents per bushel. When prices are supported at such artificial levels, nations are obliged to impose quotas and other restrictions on competitively priced imports. The next step is to push surpluses into world markets by means of export subsidies. The competition in granting "artificial aids to exports" has become so intense that it resembles in many ways the competitive devaluation of currency in the 1930's—and is equally self-defeating.

If we are sincere in our proposal to strengthen the free world by means of foreign investment, technical assistance, and other ways, it is highly inconsistent to weaken it by encouraging such beggar-my-neighbor policies as these. Yet it is just in this area that our failure in world leadership is most conspicuous. As a consequence of supporting the prices of agricultural commodities at levels entirely unrelated to costs of production, and the realities of world markets, we have not only accumulated the surpluses described earlier, but we have been forced to impose quotas on imports of wheat, dairy products, cotton, peanuts, barley, oats, rye, and other commodities, and to pay subsidies on the export of wheat. Wheat subsidies under the International Wheat Agreement totaled nearly $600 million from 1949 to 1953, and we are still paying over sixty cents a bushel on every bushel exported. This represents the amount by which our domestic price exceeds the world price.

That the world is looking for leadership out of this suicidal race is evident from the fact that three cabinet ministers from Canada flew to Washington in January to urge that we modify section 22 of the

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Agricultural Adjustment Act. This section authorizes the imposition of quotas to exclude imports which compete with commodities under control or disposal programs. And since the United States is the world's largest exporter and importer, the GATT agreement will amount to very little unless we join up. Nevertheless, we were unable to offer any assurances to the Canadian officials, and our delegates at Geneva had no alternative but to insist that the revised agreement contain loopholes large enough to accommodate our quota system and some type of subsidization of exports. In fact, so inhospitable is the climate in this country to such concessions, that the Trade Agreements Extension Act which barely squeaked by the House contains a clause declaring any action or agreement which conflicts with laws like section 22 will be without effect.

While it is true that we have used import restrictions and subsidies with restraint, it is difficult to induce smaller and industrially weaker nations to agree to banning such practices when they see the most powerful nation in the world insisting upon them whenever it seems convenient to do so.

ANOTHER example of the temptation to economic nationalism which is endangering our foreign economic leadership is the two-price system. A two-price system for wheat was written into the Agricultural Act of 1954 but was removed in conference with the Senate. It has again been included in the 1955 agricultural act now before the House, and a similar plan has been proposed for cotton and rice.

A two-price plan is a seductively simple way out of our difficulties. Under such a plan as it appears in the House draft of the 1955 agricultural act, the Secretary of Agriculture would before planting time determine the quantity of wheat which will be consumed as food in the United States during the coming marketing year. For the past ten years domestic consumption has been highly stable and has averaged about 500 million bushels a year, or roughly half the annual output. This domestic food quota would be apportioned among the states, counties and farms in accordance with their production in the preceding five years.

The Secretary would issue marketing certificates aggregating the total domestic food quota, e.g., 500 million bushels. He would then determine the value of the certificates as equal to the difference between one hundred per cent of parity and the estimated actual farm price per bushel. Each farmer would receive certificates in an amount equal to the domestic food quota established for his farm. The farmer would harvest his crop and sell it at the going market price. He would then sell his marketing certificates to the Commodity Credit Corporation, to a wheat processor, or to some intermediary. The proceeds therefrom when added to the market price for the wheat sold for food would result in full parity price on his share of the domestic food quota.

Flour millers and other processors would be obliged to purchase enough certificates to equal the volume of wheat processed for food for domestic consumption. The resulting increase in their costs of production would presumably be passed on in whole or in part to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Wheat produced in excess of the domestic food quota would not entitle the grower to wheat certificates but could be sold for feed or export at the going world price.

Space does not permit an extended discussion of the pros and cons of the two-price system. It is essentially a form of dumping, which is defined as selling abroad at prices below the domestic price. Secondly, if the blended price received by the farmer is anywhere near present levels, it will result in a continuation of the present high levels of production (unless acreage controls even more drastic than those now in effect are forced upon farmers), and a large proportion of that supply will seek foreign outlets. Here it will run up against the traditionally inelastic import demand of deficit countries and the typically inelastic supply of other exporting countries. The increased exports will therefore tend to force down world prices, and will be met by anti-dumping measures on the part of importing countries, and by various counter measures, ranging from multiple exchange rates to outright price war on the part of exporting countries in whose balance of trade wheat is an important item.

If we wish to do our part in eliminating such cut-throat policies, the course to be followed is obvious. The first step will be to retain the agricultural act of 1954, which permits considerable flexibility in support prices, and return as soon as feasible to the full flexibility originally provided for in the act of 1949. Then as conditions permit, supports can be removed altogether. Taken in conjunction with measures to be suggested below, this will be a benefit to farmers and to society as a whole, because support prices tied to an arbitrary level like parity are a most capricious way to re-

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distribute income. They take no account of reductions in cost due to technological improvements or of differences in costs in different parts of the country. Thus horses today are selling at 13 per cent of parity, while citrus growers are doing nicely with grape fruit selling at 22 per cent of parity and oranges at 40 to 60 per cent. Likewise, the support price for wheat is now about $2.26 but the estimated costs of production range from 80 cents in western Kansas to $1.76 in Indiana and Michigan.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the lion's share of the alleged benefits of the program go to a minority of high income farmers. This fact was brought out in a different way recently by Professor D. Gale Johnson, of the University of Chicago. He has shown that the net income of the 1.23 million farmers who sold 73 per cent of all farm products in 1949 averaged $6350, as compared with an average of $5100 for non-farm families. Thus our price support program tends to take income from the lower income groups and distribute it to an aristocracy of farmers. In fact, although there may be some indirect benefits to low income farmers, the disparity of direct benefits is most glaring. For instance, the average wheat loan for the state of North Dakota in 1953 was $2890, while the average for the five highest was $71,253. The proportions were roughly similar for corn loans in Iowa, but in Mississippi, the average cotton loan for the state was $372, while the average of the five highest loans was $479,535.

IF in the interest of an enlightened foreign economic policy it will be necessary to abandon or modify our present price support program, what can we put in its place? In a previous article on agricultural policy (The Commonweal, November 27, 1953), we outlined various constructive proposals which have been advanced from time to time by students of the farm problem. Three of them are particularly applicable to the present discussion. However, a basic prerequisite for the success of any plan for improving farm welfare is the maintenance of a high level of employment in the economy as a whole. It is worth repeating that the farmer will be better off with 90 per cent of full employment in the economy as a whole than with price supports at 90 per cent of parity on a few of his products.

Since the farmer is so exposed to the impact of economic forces, he quite properly has a deep-seated fear of depression. One of the reasons he clings so relentlessly to a patently ineffective price support program is that it seems to offer one element of stability in a situation of constant and unpredictable change. Understandably enough, he will not let go of what he has unless he is offered a better insurance against catastrophic price declines such as he experienced in the 1930's. So if, despite all efforts to the contrary, a real depression does develop, it would simply be the part of wisdom to have ready a variety of specially designed measures to meet it on all fronts. Such an anti-depression measure on the farm front would be supplementary income payments, which could be considered as a reward to the farmer for maintaining production as he typically does during depressions.

Various methods have been suggested for putting such a plan into operation. The one essential is that the payments should not be tied to a rigid standard like parity prices as in the case of the wool program; rather they should be designed to offset the difference between depression prices and the normal price of a given number of pre-depression years. Once the depression is over, the payments should cease.

A second hazard inherent in farming is uncertainty. Not only does the farmer have no control over total output or price, but he is subject to all the vagaries of weather and pests, and the uninformed guesses of several million other farmers. Therefore, to take some

of the guess-work out of farming, and to make it easier to plan production wisely, many economists advocate shifting some of the uncertainty to society through forward prices. Under such a plan a government agency would forecast future demand and supply conditions and estimate the equilibrium price which would result from the free play of economic forces. Then a few months before farmers make their production plans for the coming year, the agency would announce this price for each product as a minimum to be maintained or changed gradually throughout the production and marketing period. Each farm would then be able to compare alternatives with complete security and produce the combination of crops and animal products which in view of the relative prices would be most suited to the resources at his command. Thus society would gain through more efficient production and lower costs, which would be reflected in lower prices.

Thirdly, as indicated earlier, there are many low-income farm groups which receive almost no benefit from the present price support program because of the

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meagerness of the resources at their command. For instance, price supports at even 200 per cent of parity would be of little value to the cotton farmers in the Southern Piedmont, where despite a good crop in 1953, the average labor return per family was $459, or seventeen cents an hour. The figures for 1954 would undoubtedly be even lower. That similar conditions exist in other areas is evident from the fact that the 1950 census revealed that there are 1,500,000 farmers (28 per cent) who receive incomes of less than $1000 a year.

A program designed to help low income farmers is now under study by the President's Advisory Commission on agriculture. Such a program will have to take account of the surplus farm population in many areas, while the solution will lie along lines of providing employment opportunities in industry and in reorganizing uneconomic farming units into genuine family sized farms which will make full use of the family labor at satisfactory rates of return.

To fit farm people for jobs in industry may require a system of vocational education in depressed rural areas, together with low-cost loans to cover expenses of migrating to places where jobs are available. Similarly, low-cost loans and farm management assistance will be necessary to enable farmers who remain on farms to bring their farms up to the size and efficiency comparable to that attained in more progressive areas. A solution of this sort merely recognizes that in view of the constant advance in productivity, our food and fibre can be produced with a constantly smaller number of farmers. This has been going on for over a century. The net migration from farms in the United States since 1945 has totalled over 8,000,000 and the farm population now comprises only 13.8 per cent of the total population, as compared with 23.2 per cent in 1940. And there are still millions of farm people whose level of living could be improved if they could secure off-the-farm employment. It must be noted, however, that moving from an under-employed position on an under-sized farm does not necessarily imply abandoning rural living. It is now well-established that with modern means of transportation and a forty hour week, or less, a rural home, complete with smokehouse and cow, is entirely compatible with a full-time urban job.

APPEAL FOR READING MATTER

Father J. Myers, Mithapur (W.R.), Saurastra, India, asks for Catholic books and magazines for the Information Center he conducts in a small industrial town. He says that if he were to buy a two-dollar book he would have to go without meals for five days. "Any book, old or new, on Religion, Spirituality or Social Questions, will be most welcome."

LABOR

The Battle Over "Right-to-Work"

A FEW weeks ago a "right-to-work" bill was considered by a committee of the Massachusetts legislature. Father Francis McDonnell, chaplain of the Catholic Labor Guild of Boston, was present to testify against it. "The passage of this bill," he said, "would be tantamount to granting any part of management that wanted it a license for 'union-busting'." And he concluded by reading a telegram Archbishop Rummel of New Orleans had sent to the Louisiana legislature last summer. This was moving, because in Louisiana to come out against the right-to-work bill was a very brave and unpopular thing for an Archbishop to do. This was what the telegram said:

"It [the bill] is insincere because, while it pretends to guarantee the right to work, it actually frustrates that right, in effect exposing labor to lose security, a decent standard of living and humane working conditions. It makes a mockery of the constitutional right to organize for the common good and welfare. It invites continuing and recurring social strife and discontent. In a word, it is unfair and unsocial class legislation contrary to the common good."

Despite the Archbishop's strong words the bill became law in Louisiana. The Massachusetts House voted one hundred and ninety to two last month against the measure, but only a few days before that Utah had become the eighteenth state to enact "right-to-work" legislation. Over one-third of our states have now thrown the force of law behind anti-unionism. The labor movement is getting worried, and with good reason.

It is one of the charming features of the Taft-Hartley Act that it takes precedence over the state laws where it is more restrictive on the subject of union security. Thus, for example, *the closed shop* (where the employer may hire only men supplied by the contracting union) is permissible under the laws of thirty states, but is forbidden by Taft-Hartley anyway, at least as far as interstate commerce goes, which is pretty far.

But Taft-Hartley says to the states, in effect, "This is as far as political realities permit us to go. But if you can go farther, by all means do so." Thus the eighteen states mentioned get the green light to outlaw any other form of union security such as the union

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shop, maintenance of membership, or the check-off, even in interstate commerce. (*The union shop* is one in which the employer may hire a non-unionist, but the latter must join the union within thirty days. *Maintenance of membership* provides that all those who join the union must remain members of it during the life of the contract, but new employees are not required to join. *Check-off* means that those signing a check-off authorization have their dues deducted by the employer and given to the union, and this authorization cannot be revoked for the life of the contract or a period of one year, whichever is shorter. All "right-to-work" laws forbid the closed shop, the union shop, and maintenance of membership. Some also make check-offs illegal.)

As Archbishop Rummel implied, the man who invented the phrase "right-to-work" was a genius in the field of phony propaganda. The only right to work that these bills are concerned with is the right of the rugged individualist and the cheapskate to work in a place and enjoy the wages and benefits secured by union organization without paying their part of the fare, the right to ride on the backs of their fellow workers for free. They do nothing whatever to secure the right to work as such—nothing.

ONE of the most significant developments of the "right-to-work" movement has been the remarkable outburst of the opposition on the part of the Catholic clergy. I cannot remember a social question on which there has been more unanimity among Catholic clergy who were willing to be quoted. Nor one on which certain Catholic laymen have disagreed more sharply with their spiritual leaders. In New Orleans, for example, sixty-six Catholic businessmen paid for a newspaper ad in which they took issue with the Archbishop. This was one of their statements, highlighting the only Catholic priest in America I know who has written anything that could be interpreted as friendly to right-to-work bills:

"The statements of Father Twomey as the representative of the Archbishop [Rummel] are in direct conflict with other learned and holy men of the Church. Reverend Edward A. Keller, C.S.C. . . . University of Notre Dame, in 1953 in his book, *Christianity and American Capitalism,* under the imprimatur of Archbishop John F. Noll, with a foreword by Archbishop John Francis O'Hara, in interpreting the words of Pius XII, wrote: 'Pope Pius XII criticizes labor monopoly and apparently also the closed shop, as dangerous to the individual worker's personal rights, liberty and conscience.' "

As Ed Marciniak of Chicago's Catholic Labor Alliance remarked about this quotation, "In one sentence the laymen managed to line up a Father Keller, two archbishops, and Pius XII in seeming opposition to the Archbishop of New Orleans." In another part of the ad they try to line up another Pope, Leo XIII, with the following quote, which is also being used by Noel Sargent, secretary of the National Association of Manufacturers, in his speeches and pamphlets as a justification for "right-to-work" laws:

"There is a good deal of evidence which goes to prove that many of these societies [unions] are in the hands of invisible leaders and are managed on principles far from compatible with Christianity and public well-being, and that they do their best to get into their hands the whole field of labor and to force workmen either to join them or to starve." This passage is similar to those quoted from Pius XII.

The answer to it was ably given by Monsignor George G. Higgins, director of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

He pointed out that Leo was talking about the "anti-religious, Marxist unions" of Europe and that this passage "is completely irrelevant to the subject of the union shop as we know it in the United States."

Two points should be mentioned to underscore this irrelevance: one, a quotation which *seems* to be critical of the *closed* shop cannot logically be used against the union shop, or maintenance of membership, or the check-off. Secondly, in America the Taft-Hartley Act (and this is one feature of it that I have always defended) forbids an employer to discharge a man simply because he has been expelled from the union. The only offense for which a man may be discharged is non-payment of dues. Therefore no union, under our federal law, can prevent a man from being hired, nor can it force him to be discharged for any other reason than failure to pay dues (that is, in the thirty states that still don't have open-shop laws).

When Catholic priests and bishops in America defend the union shop, they follow in the tradition of one of its first defenders, the late Monsignor John A. Ryan, whose article in the *Catholic Enclyclopedia* is still a classic on the subject. They do so on the ground that under the particular conditions and traditions of American industry, a union shop is often necessary for effective union organization. Therefore since effective union organization is morally sound and desirable, freedom to negotiate a union shop is also morally sound and desirable, and any restriction on that right morally unsound and undesirable.

Ultimately, this argument comes down to a study of "the particular conditions and traditions" which make the union shop necessary. The best study I have seen so far along this line is that by Father Leo C. Brown, S.J., director of the Jesuits' Institute of Social Order, in his article, " 'Right-to-Work' Legislation," in the March issue of *Social Order* (3908 West-

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minster Place, St. Louis). Father Brown uses statistics to show that, unlike its European counterpart, American industry has an abnormally high turnover. Two samples: "In a study of labor mobility in six eastern cities it was found that from 1940 through 1949 only thirty per cent of the men and seventeen per cent of the women were continuously employed by one employer during the decade. . . . To keep . . . one hundred jobs filled more than four hundred people may have been hired in the ten years."

The turnover in service industries is of course even worse than in manufacturing. Father Brown points to one service-industry union in St. Louis of 5,400 members which took in 2,246 members in one year while it was losing 2,456, for a net loss of 210. Anyone can imagine how many more members such a union would lose if it could not depend on union security provisions in its contracts. Even with them, life for such unions is one continuous struggle for survival.

One thing I thank God for, namely, that the right-to-work movement did not hit us twenty years ago. Today the Church in America has a hard core of well-trained priests who know the labor movement and are ready and able to defend it from attacks of this kind. It is a tribute to the American Church that the sixty-six laymen of New Orleans could find only one doubtful quotation from one American priest to justify this assault on the security and integrity of American unions.

JOHN C. CORT.

THE SCREEN

BOY MEETS GIRL, 1955

ROMANCE in the movies now is a far, far different thing than it was some twenty or even ten years ago; but even now it is not often that we get a wonderfully realistic film like "Marty." No doubt we owe a vote of thanks to television, where this play by Paddy Chayefsky first appeared, but we should also thank the Harold Hecht-Burt Lancaster producing organization for having the imagination and courage to make a television play into a movie and for making such a good one. Paddy Chayefsky, who also wrote the screenplay, served as associate producer with Producer Hecht on this lovely, heart-warming film about two lonely people who find each other in the big city of New York.

Many things about "Marty" make it completely unlikely as a movie. It is too long and it moves too slowly at times. But Director Delbert Mann knows exactly when to have his actors break our hearts. Its hero is an unglamorous, Italian-American butcher in his mid-thirties, played by Ernest Borgnine who is known mainly for portraying villains in "From Here to Eternity" and "Bad Day at Black Rock"; and its heroine is a somewhat spinsterish schoolteacher, played by Betsy Blair in a crushed manner as if she might burst into tears at any minute. When they meet at the Star Dust Dance Hall, and get to know each other and become attracted, you hope against hope that things will work out for them. Borgnine plays the role to perfection: the easy-going, kindly, tired-of-being-nagged-at-about-marriage bachelor who is somewhat reluctant to break away from the old gang or to hurt his mother. Mama (Esther Minciotti) has been more than anxious to have Marty get married, but now her sister convinces her that being a mother-in-law is a pretty dreary thing, and furthermore this schoolteacher isn't Italian and furthermore she's a college graduate and furthermore and furthermore. Your heart bleeds for Marty, especially when his enthusiasm for his new-found friend wanes and he seems to fall back into routine with his restless and bored pals. This movie is more than a story of two lonely people. It has caught beautifully the sights and sounds of a big city—and most of all it has caught the vernacular of the people who live in a big city. You'd be foolish to miss "Marty."

IN its way, I suppose, "Chance Meeting" could also be called a modern boy-meets-girl. Its setting is modern London, but its story is as old as "Romeo and Juliet," from which it has borrowed its main themes. This English film, effectively directed by Anthony Asquith, has two attractive young people in the lead roles: Odile Versois as the daughter of the Minister from one of the Iron Curtain countries, and David Knight as a young American in the Intelligence Department of the American Embassy. These two lonely ones meet by chance at a performance of "Swan Lake," become friends and fall in love before they reveal their identities. They become lovers, the girl becomes pregnant, but their romance is doomed when both are suspected of subversion. So they run away—but where? The long, intensely exciting chase leads to nowhere; and the film ends on a plague-on-both-your-houses note.

"Chance Meeting" has a certain poignancy that is quite touching. This is due to the well-written script by George Tabori and Robin Estridge, the nice use of the "Swan Lake" music to point up the themes and the good acting of a large cast. The young couple are very casual about their love-making, but their story states awfully well, in the words of the girl's father, the truth that "The world is divided in two, and you cannot escape that fact by running."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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THE STAGE

THE DARK IS LIGHT ENOUGH

IT would seem that Mr. Christopher Fry's new play has, at its center, a place of resistance, a curious intransigence which no pressure can quicken into life. Two productions—in London and New York—have, with various degrees of force brought that pressure to bear; neither has released an image of energy or power. Stubbornly the play refuses animation; its elegant planes of statement, so polished and lustrous, seem to be inflexible, wanting in dramatic suppleness. Yet here is the paradox: that beneath the cool and distant surface of the evening, one senses a commanding unity of experience, an incandescent flame of spirit which subtly warms and irradiates the play's opaque texture. I am forced to the indefensible critical judgment: that in production, "The Dark is Light Enough" does not grasp the interest, yet in text could not more compel it; that it is at once Mr. Fry's least successful composition for the theater, and his most distinguished achievement; that its presentation here is an occasion of limited theatrical power, but one nevertheless which exposes beautifully a moral sensibility of rare discretion and fineness.

The darkness of the title is anarchy and war, specifically the Austro-Hungarian rebellion of 1848: a time stormy and clouded, of "fearful excitements" and inverted loyalties, through which the Countess Ostenburg—like the butterfly in an epigraph from the naturalist Fabre which precedes the play—makes a serene passage, "without hesitation . . . so well directing [her] tortuous flight that, in spite of all the obstacles to be evaded, [she] arrives in a state of perfect freshness, [her] great wings intact. . . ." And beneath those wings lie folded a natural grace and grandeur of spirit, a world of love and ancestral pieties, a "divine non-interference" in whose neighborhood, yet, "lives make and unmake themselves." For what emerges from the devious and whorled passages of "The Dark is Light Enough" is a dramatization of the workings of love in relation to the self and to the other, a graph, drawn with great beauty and delicacy, of what critic Derek Stanford calls "the systole and diastole of human aspiration, and its concomitant limitation." There are echoes of truth, broken arcs of melody, in the subsidiary characters: in the "dangerous, partial love" of Colonel Janik; in the misanthropic egotism of the impossible Gettner, rejected by good; in Gelda's "feeling of no definition." Yet the major theme belongs to the Countess; she is the fullest orchestration of what is elsewhere fragmentary and incomplete, the deepest vessel yet to hold the full tide of Fry's profound quietism and reverence for life. And what the play studies, in all its implications, is the fact of that love being forced to move to "the hard heart of the world . . . where bad and good eat at the same table."

So splendidly is the situation established, so discreetly the somber background relieved by wit, so inescapable the pressure of wisdom and fine sensibility, that we are at a loss to determine the point of weakness. Does it perhaps lie—I hazard the guess—in some flaw of the dramatic rhythm, some failure adequately to transmute psychology into behavior? For the drama of the piece is largely contained in Gettner, and there is, one must confess, a tedium in misanthropy so implacably pursued, the tedium, indeed, of any posture rigidly and remorselessly sustained. For between two such disparate poles of feeling, there can be no possibility of reconciliation, only a field to absorb the endless discharge of nervous energy. (Something of this same defect similarly corrupted Graham Greene's "The Living Room.") What I should wish to emphasize, however, is not so much this failure, as the new achievement of Mr. Fry's verse form. He has moved far from that "refusal of the noun" which seemed an endemic feature of his talent; the drift towards diffusion, detonation, externality has been checked. A chastity of image cools the promiscuous self-indulgence of the earlier plays. The verse has been purified and flushed of waste; now it much more closely embodies, identifies the action and the poetry. If it still tends to gnomic utterance, is not yet, perhaps, Mr. Eliot's "form to arrest the flow of spirit," nevertheless it is a medium in which the dilation of thought and consciousness may be most faithfully recorded.

Mr. McClintic's production does not, unhappily, impose the requisite authority on the play. The dramatic rhythm is lax and discontinuous, the style distended with a fatigued elegance, almost a modish vulgarity; ultimately, Oliver Messel's superficially impressive decor is operatic and intimidating. The playing, too, is insecure: least so in the fine tensile wit of John Williams and Donald Harron; most obvious in the pallid Gelda of Marian Winters, and Tyrone Power's shrill, unfocused Gettner. (Certainly the role is devoid of charm, yet need it—in performance—quite so rancidly reek of make-up and footlights?) To the Countess, Miss Cornell brings her grace and presence, "that shimmer and shadow," as Stark Young noted, "that stage magnetism which is essentially hers." Easily she invokes the impulse of aristocracy, yet what she cannot quite command is the form—that form a classical theater would have imposed on her rich, supremely individual personality. Still, at her best, she brings to Mr. Fry's faultless last scene a boldness of line, a sobriety and grave beauty few could equal: the beauty of spirit released from time and circumstances, and writing a signature of love in the inconstant air. (*At the ANTA Playhouse.*) RICHARD HAYES.

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ALL THIS AND HEAVEN TOO?

LAST week on this page some harsh things were said about Senator Matthew Neely's attack on the President's church-going habits. I would not like to see that defense of the President interpreted as a kind of approving nod to the rank religiosity that appears so frequently in Washington, as elsewhere, these days.

Religiosity—or the God-bit as it is called in the more cynical capital circles—has long been a part of our political tradition. For generations even the proudest politicos have ended chest-thumping speeches with protestations of their deep spiritual humility. What campaign speech was ever complete without a concluding pious sentiment?

We are rather used to the God-bit. The people, especially religious people, seem to demand it—and who is to say that there may not be some faint ring of sincerity as the politico's little coins of godliness are dropped? In any case, kept within reason, the old-fashioned God-bit probably never did very much harm and I can even conceive of some good that might have come of it. Whatever his motives, Caesar should bow from time to time if merely to remind us that he is only Caesar.

I am not speaking of that sort of thing here. The new God-bit is more serious. It is the identification of our national cause, our needs, our ends—conceived in political and military terms—with God's cause, His needs and His ends.

Not long ago someone facetiously suggested a song-title to sum up the present phenomenon—"God Is an American." Certain vestiges of America's Calvinist past seem to have reappeared, with the result that even people who know better talk as if ours is not only God's country but that we are indeed His Chosen People, no longer seeing through a glass darkly but unerringly fulfilling the designs of Providence, almost without effort.

There has been a tendency in the last few years—bolstered, I am sorry to say, by the President himself—to identify greatness and godliness. America is great, Mr. Eisenhower said on one occasion, because America is good; when America ceases to be good it will no longer be great.

I cannot say just what Mr. Eisenhower had in mind. Perhaps haps he was simply talking about moral grandeur. But I am afraid that his maxim was generally interpreted to mean that American greatness, measured in material wealth and political stature, was somehow a reward for American godliness.

An atheistic nation may be great. A have-not nation may be godly. It may even be that when a great nation begins to think of itself as godly because it is great, it has gone a long way toward losing its claim on godliness. *God Is My Co-Pilot* was the title of a war hero's memoirs. At the time the book came out, the sheer arrogance of that title could be charitably attributed to occupational disease. But the idea of the Almighty's being assigned to a flight *we* chart and to assisting in a mission *we* design seems recently to have become something of a national delusion in this country.

There are evidences of the sickness on all sides. Statesmen speak confidently of religion as a great weapon in the cold war and talk of God as if He were man's servant rather than the other way round. The Church is praised for being a bulwark against Communism, as if it too had enlisted for the duration. Religious people claim special patriotic credit for believing in their faith and speak as if piety were a Military Occupational Specialty.

Just the other day a famous columnist told me that he tries to get ex-Communists to join the Catholic Church because once they have accepted Catholic discipline they are not likely to backslide. The columnist is not himself a Catholic. He does not think of the Church as the custodian of God's truth so much as he thinks of it as a kind of anti-Communist protective society. But what happens to religion when it is conceived this way as a kind of handmaiden to a political movement?

There are many things one could say about the drift toward religiosity. One involves the agonizing question of ends and means. There is an ancient moral proposition that good ends do not justify evil means. I sense two current tendencies in our thinking about this general problem, both equally disastrous. One is the tendency to ignore the proposition. Miles of copy have been written on that subject, and I will not lengthen the mileage here. The other is to forget that the proposition is a moral and not a sure-fire practical proposition. For it is a fact that evil ends have successfully served good means, if success is to be measured in worldly terms. The use of pure means does not necessarily secure practical success. Nor does the use of immoral means guarantee failure. We sometimes have to risk failure in order to remain moral. The evil prosper and the good languish. If religion has any message for society, this is it. God's justice cannot be measured by its practical successes in this life.

As soon as this has been said, and believed, religion ceases to be the handmaiden of any force other than its own. It may even be that moral people may have to suffer greatly because of their very morality. Religious people cannot kill wantonly; they cannot use every means at hand, even when experience shows that these means, however reprehensible, work; they may have to choose between immorality and survival and prove again that the children of this world are wiser in their generation. . . . The cheerful religiosity of Positive Thinking may be successful. I wonder how much it has to do with Christianity?

JOHN COGLEY.

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Art and the Boxoffice

WALTER KERR

THE notion that the common customer might come back to the theater if the theater took some pains to please the common customer is, in our time, a revolutionary one. It is, moreover, shocking. Are we to surrender our gains in literacy to return to "Bertha, the Sewing-Machine Girl"?

"Bertha" is a sort of macabre race-memory these days, a turn-of-the-century masterpiece we'd all like to live down. The plot, "of which there isn't much" wrote a perfectly straight-faced New York critic in 1906, took up the assorted abductions and rescues of poor little Bertha Sloane and her blind sister, Jessie. In Act One, Bertha was chloroformed, tossed into a red automobile, hustled to an "uncharted cave in Central Park," and thrown into a lake, the while a gentleman named Slinky Bill crawled up to a second-story window where blind Jessie sat singing to a bound-and-gagged hero. In Act Two, Bertha was tossed onto a moving belt in a sweatshop, carried off to a New York mansion boasting at least one room designed to resemble an Egyptian temple, and there made to watch sister Jessie being suffocated in the mechanical arms of an image of Isis; before the act curtain came down, Jessie had also been deposited in a runaway motorboat on the Hudson River. In Act Three, Jessie's room was set afire, a fireman bribed not to answer the alarm, and Bertha herself arrived on the engines to deal with the matter. There was a fourth act, too.

Can an art-form flirt with the vulgar mind without sharing that mind's vulgarity? In the nineteenth century Dion Boucicault was a popular dramatist, and a dreadful one. Owen Davis, in 1910, was not a great deal better. The motion picture, rather than the stage, has been popular in the twentieth century; do we seriously want to ape its quality in order to win its audience?

It is perfectly true, by the way, that a craftily popular theater sometimes produces "Bertha, the Sewing-Machine Girl" and nothing more. It is also true that the same kind of theater, consciously catering to the same kind of audience, has at other times produced "Macbeth," "Oedipus," and "Tartuffe."

As our English instructors used to point out, generally with a dryly conspiratorial air, Shakespeare was a man with both eyes firmly fastened on the boxoffice; this was a simple necessity, since the major portion of his income came from his sharing directly in the day's receipts. Shakespeare's competition was the bear-baiting pit, and he was always concerned to meet it: with murders, duels, battles, wrestling-matches, suicides, ghosts, witches, clowns, songs, costume parades, explosions, thunderstorms and plain and fancy eye-gouging.

The plays of Shakespeare came out of a theater dedicated to the proposition that the illiterate was not only welcome but that he had to be wooed uninterruptedly throughout the performance, at whatever sacrifice in taste. This dramatic pattern—busy, bloodthirsty, unblushingly theatrical—had been set by Kyd, Marlowe, and lesser men; Shakespeare made certain interesting improvements on it, but he was careful not to destroy it.

Moliere learned to play the same currently unfashionable game. He learned it, however, the hard way. Having challenged a sophisticated Paris on its own terms at the age of twenty-one, and having gone to jail for his prompt financial failure, he turned to the provinces to pick up the first principles of his trade. By the time he had spent thirteen years figuring out how to please a procession of unruly rustics, he discovered that he was at last able to please Parisian audiences as well.

The plays of Sophocles came from a society which believed in slavery, and which also believed that every slave was entitled to a seat in the theater. Because the conventions of Greek drama seem so remote to us now, we hazily imagine Greek performance to have been a sober and high-minded affair. Actually, the performance was garish, musicalized, and shatteringly robust; the audience was a noisy, basket-lunch crowd on a holiday, never above stoning a playwright whose work was not up to par.

NO great play has ever come from what might be called a "minority" theater. All of the work we prize most highly was born of the commercial or at least competitive hurly-burly, and in the presence of a mass audience.

Minority theaters, theaters consciously and carefully fashioned to appeal to the "enlightened," have

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Mr. Kerr, former Commonweal drama critic, now is critic for the New York Herald Tribune. This article is from his forthcoming book, *How Not to Write a Play*, to be published by Simon and Schuster.

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existed. One of the most revealing is the Italian theater of the Renaissance. Here a sharp cleavage was drawn between the popular — or vulgar — theater and the literary theater of the intellectuals. What was fit for the people was one thing; what was acceptable to men of taste was another. The results: the literary drama of the intellectuals was stillborn; the despised improvisation of the common folk — the commedia dell'arte —quickly developed the sort of vigor that was to keep it alive on its own slapstick terms for two hundred years and to lead, by a process of natural growth, to the ultimate literacy of Goldoni and Moliere.

The contest between the majority-minority ideals existed in Shakespeare's time. John Lyly, for instance, was a man of undisputed talent. He preferred, however, not to soil himself in the public playhouse, choosing to write and stage his work in the purer air of the 'minority' theaters of the court. While his lowbrow friends went on to greatness, Lyly shriveled into the literary-precious. By the time Lyly, aged about forty, wrote his last play, Shakespeare had completed "Romeo and Juliet," "Richard II," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Merchant of Venice."

The contempt that we feel for the common mind, and that we act upon in writing our plays, was felt, but fortunately less widely acted upon, in the Elizabethan period. Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, found the popular playhouse "observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry," behaving "with neither decency nor discretion." As Marchette Chute has recently reminded us in her *Shakespeare of London,* Sidney "had one of the most intelligent and beautiful minds of his generation." When he went to a public entertainment, though, he behaved more or less in the manner that Shaw has ascribed to William Morris: "all he could find there was a gross violation . . . of common sense."

Miss Chute has further reminded us of "the contempt that most young university intellectuals felt for a popular professional writer like William Shakespeare. The plays written by the students of Oxford and Cambridge, or by their teachers, were in every way superior to the crass London product. They were quite untainted by commercialism, they appealed to educated gentlemen instead of London tinkers, and it was undeniable that they were beautifully staged . . . The students of Oxford and Cambridge were the future hope of the nation and it was not fitting that their minds should become corrupted by watching vulgar productions."

Happily, Shakespeare was fond of money and tinkers, and quite indifferent to this sort of criticism. And, like every other effort to impose intellectual standing upon the drama by main force, the Oxford-Cambridge vision produced nothing we care to keep. Even Moliere, when he wrote specifically for private performance at the court, wrote less well than he did for the mob.

The experience of the past is there for us to look at. Even if we were to pursue this sort of inquiry into the present, where ultimate values are less certain, we might find ourselves startled and disconcerted by the obvious, by what everyone knows and what everyone pretends not to know. Few arms would have to be twisted to get agreement on the proposition that Chaplin is the finest theatrical artist to have appeared in our time. Yet, once again, the most distinguished artistry has come from the most vulgar roots. Chaplin is not a product of the responsible legitimate theater but of the irresponsible, wholly commercial, film; his beginnings — and his enduring essence — are not to be found in deliberate theory but in spontaneous slapstick; he is a creation not of the higher criticism but of the mindless masses. Indeed, his eventual adoption by the higher criticism has done him the only serious damage of his career. It is in his last few films, as he has begun to cut away his links with the common herd and to speak directly to his new-found intellectual friends, that his artistry has faltered.

These are all home-truths, so familiar that repetition would seem superfluous. Yet we have perfected a fascinating technique for dealing with them: we have stored them tidily away in one cranial compartment, swiftly performed a frontal lobotomy, and gone on believing in their opposites. Shakespeare wrote for groundlings, yes; it would corrupt our work to do so. Sophocles was forced to deal with the mass mind; artistry it not possible under these conditions. Moliere perfected himself by coming to grips with the common appetite; the common appetite produces nothing better than "Abie's Irish Rose." Chaplin is the best we know; the popular, pandering motion picture is beneath discussion.

At such times as we *are* compelled to tangle with the facts of theatrical history, we take refuge in the 'in spite of' theory. Shakespeare was great in spite of his concessions. Moliere was great in spite of his low farce tricks. Chaplin is great in spite of his medium. These men scored personal triumphs *over* circumstances which were in themselves undesirable.

The truth, I suspect, is the other way round; these men found greatness *because* of their communion with the universal audience; the presence of the uncultivated mass in the theater is an indispensable prerequisite to drama of genuine stature; greatness grows out of the very challenge.

THE ideal entertainment, no doubt, is one which pleases both the shopgirl and William Morris. (This is not, by the way, the view we hold today — we have dismissed any consideration of the shopgirl's

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tastes; but it is a view on which we are likely to get at least verbal agreement from the most inflexible esthete.)

The question is whether you achieve this all-level theater by legislating downward from an intellectual bias, or by building upward from a mass instinct.

The historical evidence, if I read it rightly, is altogether in favor of the latter. A 'great' theater comes into existence by first attending to the most primitive passions of its most primitive patrons. By satisfying the race's admittedly childlike — though not necessarily childish—yearning for violence, spectacle, and the broadest of broad comedy strokes, roots are sunk deep to the universal consciousness. (An intellectual will often be found prying into a popular success; a lowbrow rarely exhibits any interest in invading the intellectual's sanctuary.) It would seem that on this broad, firm, democratic base nearly anything can be built. So long as the foundation is secure, all sorts of towering structures can be erected upon it. Drama is by its nature a mass art; the presence of the mass in the amphitheater is necessary not only to the financial stability of so complex an undertaking, but also, apparently, to its artistic validity. The growth of drama is upward from the drunken revel, the shoemaker's holiday, the vulgar farce — not downward from the critical academy. Given time and encouragement, the commedia dell'arte does arrive at Moliere.

The contrary hope — that a cultivated theater may be envisioned and enforced at the intellectual level and then filter down into the popular mind — has no historical victories to support it. When a 'better' theater is sought and established by an intellectual minority it tends to produce a body of work which is literate but bloodless. It finds an understanding audience in the privacy of the court, university, or 'art' theater. To the degree that it is able to invade the commercial theater, it tends to bankrupt that theater. It speaks principally to men of an intensely rational disposition, men who seem to have exhausted the possibilities of simple pleasure and to have moved on to a somewhat rarefied preoccupation with techniques, theories, and theses. Its audience tends to cut off, sharply, below an approximate I.Q. of 130. The earthbound "twelve-year-olds" do not slowly soak up the visitation from on high. They scamper off — as in the Italian Renaissance or in our own time — to their own devices, where they inconsiderately produce — in the commedia dell'arte or in the work of Chaplin — something we all come to prize much more highly.

In fairness to the 'uplift' point of view, it must be acknowledged that the popular theater does not always rise to incontestable magnificence, that it frequently finds itself stalemated at a 'cut-off' point of its own. The popular theater has sometimes been frozen at the level of Scribe, of Boucicault, of "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl." My own guess is that this sort of esthetic roadblock is the result, not of the theater's popularity, but of a universal defect in the body politic: the age itself subscribes to a limited vision, to one or another obtuse but tenaciously-held sentimentality that successfully paralyzes the movement forward. The groundwork for "Bertha" and "Titus Andronicus," for "Charley's Aunt" and "The Taming of the Shrew," is pretty much the same. But the Elizabethan vision was as realistic as the late Victorian was piously muddle-headed. As Alfred North Whitehead has remarked in another connection, "Tennyson was a great poet with a mediocre subject. His subject was Victorian England."

However, that may be, the esthetically stalemated theater that is genuinely popular seems to me in many ways preferable to the more ambitious but deliberately unpopular theater of the minority. The popular theater, whatever its vulgarities, keeps the theatrical structure intact: it commands the loyalty of a large audience, it creates employment for actors, it offers both an outlet and an income for practicing playwrights, it maintains a body of playhouses on a profitable basis. In short, it keeps the conditions for theater alive, just as a 'minority' theater must inevitably diminish, if not destroy, them. At worst, the popular theater holds the fort; at best, it finds its way to "Hamlet."

It is the popular theater, too, that displays the greater capacity for assimilation. Shakespeare is easily able to absorb the rarefied inventions of Lyly, play with them profitably in such a tentative work as "Love's Labor's Lost," and then throw away whatever is too special for his audience. Lyly, working in the polite seclusion of a fashionable boys' school, is unable to draw any vitality from the rude experiments across the river-bank. His conceits are attractive, but they remain mere conceits; the author goes on imitating himself until his private style becomes sterile from inbreeding. When growth takes place, it takes place at the Globe.

One hesitates to develop an anti-intellectual position in an age which is increasingly — and on every front—anti-intellectual. But there are spheres in which the intellectual must be given not only his freedom but a clear authority as well; and there are spheres in which close communion with the common mind is indispensable. We are all agreed that, in the long run, we want something better than "Bertha": characterization that is both complex and honest; language that is distinctive and revealing; narrative that digs deeply into the truths of human behavior. Our problem is one of approach. For a very long time now we have tried legislating from the top down, with depressing results. It may profit us — even esthetically — to reverse gears and try for a vulgar popularity.

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An Attack on the New Orthodoxy of Literature

THE EMPEROR'S CLOTHES. By Kathleen Nott. Indiana University Press. $4.

By JOHN W. SIMONS

MISS Kathleen Nott, heretofore known chiefly as a novelist and poet, has made a clamorous debut into the demimonde of criticism with a book entitled *The Emperor's Clothes*. It is a frankly polemical work, designed, so the book jacket reminds us, as "an attack on the dogmatic orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Dorothy Sayers, C. S. Lewis, and others." The "others" are quite numerous, and among them we shall find T. E. Hulme, Basil Willey, Jacques Maritain, and Evelyn Waugh. It is difficult to withhold one's admiration from this valiant woman who, a solitary avenging nemesis, spreads ruin among the camps of the "neophilistines."

Let us admit at once the need of some such onslaught as this. The categories of theology, philosophy, science, and poetry live in a confused and quarrelsome fellowship—a fellowship factitious and contrived. Poetry claims to have annexed areas which once belonged to theology; theology arrogates the territory which belongs to literary criticism; literary criticism has become lost in the methodology of the sciences; while the scientific method—and this will be Miss Nott's unresisted temptation—will acknowledge the existence of no truth which is unamenable to its embrace.

It is altogether unfortunate that Miss Nott allowed herself to become so passionately involved in a vindication of the scientific method. She permits it to become her own "dogmatic orthodoxy" and thereby renders ineffectual her attacks on the dogmatic orthodoxies of her opponents. Besides, she expends so much fervor in defending it that she has little energy left for applying it, and her book is strewn with the sophistries she would foist upon others. One of the consequences of this, for one reviewer at least, is that her valid criticisms—and her blows are numerous and palpable—seem more the result of accident than design.

How is it possible for Miss Nott to discuss to any purpose the theology or philosophy of anyone if she is sincerely convinced that the terms are without genuine content? Granted that Eliot's theological reasoning is often dilettantish and that Hulme's "speculations" are often based on the infirm foundation of unassimilated history, such aberrations do not drain the concepts of theology and philosophy of reality or worth. C. S. Lewis's version of the Devil, like Milton's or Goethe's, may be remote from reality, but this does not mean that the Devil does not exist. Miss Nott says, though she nowhere proves, that "belief in the Devil is an extrapolation from this [i.e. belief in Original Sin] with which the sado-masochistic imagination may like to toy."

Our authoress is very resentful of what she calls "hypostatization," the giving a concrete reality to abstract terms. At the same time she "hypostatizes" all over the place, and words like "dogma" and "orthodoxy" (key words in her grand experiment in denigration) became sinister "*personae*" rather than the neutral abstractions they are. In the first two pages, where the term "faith" is germane to her argument, she uses the word in three inequivalent senses without, it would seem, the least awareness that she is committing a semantic blunder. And it is the kind of blunder she commits dozens of times in the course of her book.

Miss Nott is not embarrassed by the fact that scientists like Eddington have philosophical and even theological commitments. She airily dismisses their competence in these extracurricular matters, not, as she would be entitled to do, because they are amateurs, but because when they enter the fields of theology and philosophy they leave behind the scientific method, the only valid method of reaching truth of whatever sort. For her there simply is no truth unless it is "continually controlled by ever-developing human experience." When a scientist is invoked on behalf of theology Miss Nott says facetiously that he is "being invoked on his day off." It is evident that Miss Nott herself, for all her perfervid homage to the "hypothetical-observational technique," has written *The Emperor's Clothes* during a slack season.

It would be invidious, nevertheless, to call attention to the disabling limitations of this work without accounting for the anger which goads Miss Nott into her extravagances. And the remainder of this review will be devoted to indicating some of the attitudes—ranging from indiscretion to unencumbered absurdity—which prejudices the case of the Christian in his dealings with art and science. In doing so we shall have indirectly paid Miss Nott the one tribute that she deserves—that of having arrested the conscience of the orthodox in the meridian of its complacency.

First, there is the tendency to transfer (and in the process to confuse) the prestige which a creative writer has acquired in the exercise of his art to areas in which he has no special competency. The opinions of Eliot, Auden, C. S. Lewis, or Miss Sayers in matters of history, philosophy, and theology may be interesting but they are not compelling. Sometimes—and Miss Nott presses the point with discomfiting success—writers of a highly advertised orthodoxy air opinions which comport ill with the known precepts of the Gospel. They alienate by their imprudence and presumption. And at the same time *la bonne presse,* with monumental incomprehension, bestows on these "safe" artists the tardy tribute of its foolish praise.

Second, it has become a commonplace for religious-minded people to acquiesce a little too smugly to the notion—in itself meaningless—that Science has

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failed. I do not think that hostility to science is nearly so general on the part of the orthodox as Miss Nott seems to believe, and in any case, as we have seen, she makes arrogant claims for the efficacy of the scientific method. But it is true that Christians sometimes exhibit an unbecoming nervousness in the face of science and prematurely seize upon those scientific hypotheses which are in superficial conformity with the tenets of their faith. Not long ago Professor C. A. Coulson, in his Rede lecture, gave us a salutary warning. Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty, so often interpreted as supporting the notions of free will and the free creativity of God, has no theological relevance. "All the universe is God's, and equally any incompleteness in our description of the universe is a challenge to our ignorance—not a vindication of the Deity." And only the other day a correspondent in the London *Tablet,* the Cambridge anatomist Professor Towers, had to rebuke Sir Arnold Lunn for his indecorous glee over the exposure of the hoax of the Piltdown Man. It was as if the over-zealous apologete believed that this exposure had utterly discredited the scientific theory of evolution.

Thirdly, while there is a place for theology, philosophy, and psychology in the extrinsic study of literature, these disciplines—even when they are employed as disciplines and not as a haphazard arsenal of opinion—cannot be made to do the duty of criticism as such. Christian discrimination in literature, as F. R. Leavis has abundantly proved, only too often implies the abdication of literary discrimination. As a consequence we get essays and books which, no matter how meritorious on other grounds, have very meager literary pertinence. What purports to be literary criticism simply becomes another tract for the times.

The recent embarrassing eruptions of Graham Greene and Francois Mauriac will have had some positive value if they serve to temper the enthusiasms of those who have been speaking so recklessly of that elusive entity called "the Catholic novel." Catholicism does not need the prestige of extrinsic adornment, whether the adornment boast the form of a *fauteuil* or an oscar. There is no obvious measure between a man's achievement as an artist and his achievements as a Catholic. His art may, indeed, betray a sensibility which is more or less Catholic, but sensibility cannot safely be equated to intellectual conviction. In any case, we pay art a rude homage when we appraise it by alien norms.

The Wit of Dandyism

SANTAL. By Ronald Firbank. Bonacio & Saul, with Grove Press. $3.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

THE American liberal tradition, conceived in Puritanism and dedicated to the proposition that only "high seriousness" can ever be truly moral, has always found the wit of dandyism thoroughly alien and disagreeable. It is hardly likely, then, that the novels of Ronald Firbank, regarded by Cyril Connolly as supreme modern examples of the art of the dandy, will ever be extensively popular in America.

It is not that America cannot accept eccentricity or non-conformity; our cultural history is virtually one long record of non-conformism. The kind of eccentric or non-conformist who has been the traditional American hero, however, is of the type of the frontiersman, a dedicated idealist, devoted to a cause with such singlemindedness that he is careless of or oblivious to all that is around him.

The eccentricity of the dandy may arise, equally with that of the frontiersman, out of antipathy to society, but the dandy never loses a mordant consciousness of his society. His eccentricity, in fact, is deliberately cultivated, often with a view to the irritation of society. For, while the dandy may seem to float through life in serene contempt for the "vulgar" public, he is frequently as much concerned as the liberal to attack such social evils as poverty, crime, oppression, or intolerance.

But the weapon of the dandy, his wit, is tragically harmless against the closed minds of those who are most responsible for the evils of society. If the objects of his scorn ever become aware of his existence, they may destroy him, but for the most part they simply laugh at him. Thus, the liberals, with whom he is basically allied, must always regard him as a frivolous parasite whose impertinence tends to distract attention from the cause at hand.

While it would seem, then, that Firbank's work in this alien and unacceptable mode has little chance of American favor, it may be that *Santal,* now appearing for the first time here (it dates from 1921), will prove the exception to this dim view. For it is a study of vision and attainment, described by Edmund Wilson as Firbank's "most nearly realistic story," expressed with more obvious seriousness than was his wont.

So brief that it is hard to think of it as a novel, *Santal* has for its hero an Arab boy whose religious yearnings are in violent contrast to the hideous earthliness of the adult society around him. He sets out on a pilgrimage, seeking a holy man who is reputed to live in the mountains. What he finds at the end of his journey will seem to some only a kind of existentialist self-realization; to others it may appear to be an ironic symbol of the folly of asceticism.

But I do not think there is any real ambiguity in Firbank's conclusion of the tale. It is true that this unusually personal and serious story does not completely succeed. Certainly the lurid images that occur in it are rather too swooningly of the nineties. Long after the purple of these passages has faded, however, the reader may be haunted by the figure of little Cherif, turning from the sensuous warmth below to the desolate burning of the sun on Mount Matmata.

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And the reader who accepts Mount Matmata as a symbol of the terrible majesty of the Absolute will understand that, in the end, Cherif was not forsaken by his Lord.

Diplomacy

THE EVOLUTION OF DIPLOMATIC METHOD. By Harold Nicolson. Macmillan. $2.25.

By M. A. FITZSIMONS

HAROLD Nicolson, Edmund Wilson has written, sees life through the windows of a pre-1914 British Embassy. The suggestion of varied experience and the cultivation of a limited vision is illuminating. True, in his short stories Nicolson revealed a lively talent and a less official person. He has also ventured into politics and the history of literature. But, apart from *Some People,* a collection of short stories, and the biography of King George V, his studies of diplomacy and diplomats have been his most valuable work. Thus, he raised high hopes when he selected "The Evolution of Diplomatic Method" as the subject of his Chichele Lectures at Oxford.

This volume does not quite sustain the high hopes. The four lectures, dealing with the art of negotiation among the Greeks and Romans, in the Renaissance, in the French system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in the transition from the old diplomacy to the new, celebrate the perfection of the art of negotiation during the three centuries from Richelieu to the first world war. The eulogy is persuasive and just. The lecturer does not minimize the deceits, brutalities and stupidity that were to be found in diplomacy's golden age, and recognizes the passing of that age of sense, if not of reason, in diplomatic matters. He reiterates forcibly his distinction between the formulation of policy, a matter proper for public consideration, and diplomacy, the art of negotiation, which requires confidence, privacy and discretion.

But in spite of his urbanity the criticism of the madness of diplomacy by conference becomes monotonous. The author appears to find the burden of contemporary diplomacy, the futile conferences with the Soviet representatives, the noisy uncertainty of American foreign policy and diplomacy, so unpleasant as to be dismissed without analysis, though not without frequent expressions of disapproval. In concluding, he does not go beyond expressing some confidence in American capacity to learn from the experience of others and the hope that the immutable methods of diplomacy will prevail to usher in a calmer world. Unfortunately, his comfort is not cold enough.

The reason for this is that he assumes the universal validity of diplomatic methods and trusts that they may be generally acceptable. They are valid but they cannot be accepted by every and any society. On occasion the Soviet Union uses diplomatic methods, but it uses them in short-term fashion. Its agents cannot achieve the confidence and continuous representation that diplomacy demands. A diplomat represents a government and the character of that government profoundly influences his method of work, shapes his status at home and determines his reception by others. Such success as Soviet diplomats may achieve is bound to be limited by the recognition that the Soviet Union has a menacing long-term policy and has formidable agents in each nation's Communist Party. This is the surprising feature of the present work—that it does not understand that the old diplomacy was the product of a particular age, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which, also, briefly tamed the fury of war. But the age when Europe, dominant in the world and under the sway of a cultivated aristocracy and bourgeoisie, conceived of itself as the "great Republic" was rejected by the minds of too many men even before the first world war unleashed its destructive forces.

If Manchu China had been strong, it would have found Western diplomacy as unacceptable as it had been in seventeenth century Japan. The rational methods of diplomacy as well as the methods of critical historical scholarship are universally valid but not necessarily acceptable to every culture and society. Nicolson's failure to consider this point makes his treatment of Greek and Byzantine diplomacy rather patronizing and his final lecture unsatisfactory.

To his felicitous quotations from Callières' *The Art of Negotiating with Sóvereigns* (1716) he might have added another aphorism of that French diplomat, one that is painfully relevant to the condition of American diplomacy: "The truth requires two agents, one to tell and another to hear."

The Wild Man

PETRUS BOREL, THE LYCANTHROPE: His Life and Times. By Enid Starkie. New Directions. $5.

By VIVIAN MERCIER

UNTIL I read this book, Petrus Borel had never been anything but a name to me, four liquid syllables with an archaic beauty which I had treasured ever since I first met them in Théophile Gautier's reminiscence of the "Hernani" first night. On that memorable occasion in 1829, to which Dr. Starkie allots a whole chapter, a hundred young bohemians, some in medieval dress, acted as a claque to ensure the victory of Hugo's play—and of Romanticism —upon the Classical stage of the Comédie-Française. Gautier and his scarlet doublet were most often remembered in later years, but at the time Borel, an unpublished poet and unsuccessful architect, was the twenty-year-old leader of the wild men.

Borel's name may become a rallying-cry once again, thanks to Dr. Starkie's book, for he is surely the prototype of an increasingly familiar artistic phenomenon—the imitator who so exaggerates the tendencies of his idols that, in spite of his limited originality, he becomes the founder of a new school, even if he never receives credit for doing so

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Baudelaire's handsome acknowledgement of his debt to Borel gave Dr. Starkie the idea for this book, but Borel's output was so slight and his life story presents so many unfillable gaps that she was practically compelled to write about his times in order to fill a volume, as her subtitle indicates.

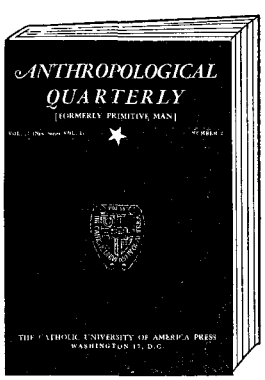
Interesting times they were, too. The July Revolution of 1830 inaugurated a bourgeois regime—headed by Louis Philippe, the citizen king, and the big financiers who supported him—which infuriated Borel and his friends even more than the reactionary reign of Charles X. Louis Philippe grew more popular later, but Borel did not make his peace with the regime until 1846, when he became an eccentric and indolent but occasionally heroic administrator in Algeria, only to lose his post in 1855, the victim of his own growing persecution mania.

In their revolt against bourgeois ideals the young men of 1830, who as Romantics had aimed at beauty and courtliness in dress and manners, now began to look and act like hoodlums. Calling themselves *Les Bouzingos* and later *Les Jeunes France,* Borel, Gérard de Nerval, Gautier and others developed a cult of disorder that is still with us in Greenwich Village—*la nostalgie de la boue,* the yearning for the gutter.

The "highbrow" and "art for art's sake" were also being born at this time. Where before writers had rejected bourgeois standards only because of a preference for aristocratic ones, they now endeavored to avoid the dictation of *any* social class and *any* segment of the reading public. Borel, indeed, met with such success in this endeavor that practically nobody read his books at all.

His only novel, *Madame Putiphar,* sounds unreadable anyway, but Dr. Starkie has high praise for some of the short stories in *Champavert* (subtitled *Immoral Tales*), though her summaries often suggest watered-down De Sade or souped-up Poe. The sardonic humor of "Passereau the Student" from *Champavert* certainly does anticipate Baudelaire, and we must bear in mind that the book appeared in 1833, the year Poe's first story was published. What was not stolen from E. T. A. Hoffmann or the Marquis de Sade must have been in the air. Look at the dates of these four very similar writers from four very different countries: Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849), James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849), Poe (1809-1849), Borel (1809-1859). Let's not forget, either, that Baudelaire translated Poe.

Oddly enough, *Rhapsodies,* Petrus Borel's book of verse, seems to have given Baudelaire little beyond the idea of writing realistically in verse about the sordid aspects of the modern city. Dr. Starkie devotes a chapter to an even more obscure figure, Théophile Dondey, who took the ludicrous anagram Philothée O'Neddy as his pen-name. His one book of poems, *Feu et Flamme* (*Fire and Flame*), seems to exude more of the bitter-sweet aroma which Baudelaire later distilled from *Flowers of Evil* than anything writ-



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Lawlessness

A TRAIN OF POWDER. By Rebecca West. Viking. $3.75.

By WILLIAM PFAFF

VERY fine reporting is, of course, as rare as very fine fiction; perhaps it is rarer, for at the center of reportage there must be an objectivity equivalent to that at the center of art, and the reporter writes about what is outside, about what must be searched for and ordered, while the novelist can look only inside himself. When you find what seems to be great reportage, you are likely to be intimidated, because it seems to know too much about living men and their motives. Such is my reaction to Miss West's writing. How can she know so much about Greenville, South Carolina, and its cab drivers and lawyers and clubwomen? How can she know so much about the miserable British Foreign Office telegrapher who was convicted of passing security information to a Soviet diplomat?

But she does seem to know it. It all fits, all rings like a bell, indeed like a carillon. She has Greenville just right. She, an Englishwoman, has precisely rendered peculiarly Southern phenomena, the small-town cab drivers, the phony liberals, the gallus-snapping and the distress and honor and evasion of the courthouse hearing evidence of lynching. She even has the fat man who drives a cab. Every small town has its fat man who drives a cab, and here he is, sweating, three hundred pounds of him, on trial for complicity in a lynching.

Miss West includes in this book the piece on the 1947 lynching in South Carolina, the story of telegrapher Marchall, the story of a bizarre British murder, and three very brilliant reports on post-war Germany, the first of which is the best defense I know of the concepts of common law and natural law which underlay the Nuremberg trials.

Her impeccable style, as great as any in the language, her compassion and insight, make this a very remarkable book, and the subject, the collision of modern lawlessness with the institutions of Western society, is of the first importance. Her book too is of the first importance, and is the kind of thing which makes ordinary journalists despair.

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Political Scrutiny

Here are excerpts from three of the political articles scheduled to appear in The Commonweal in the next few weeks:

SOVIET MAN TODAY
By Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn

The Soviet Union has officially become "a big agnostic nursery, thoroughly Victorian in the worse sense of the term, with a press, a literature, a cultural policy and a governmental machine enunciating nothing but praise and condemnations . . . All this breeds a general hypocrisy, a nausea towards everything emanating from the omnipotent state, and a boredom . . ."

THE CRISIS IN THE MRP
By John C. Olin

The problem the MRP faces "is how to keep the conservative Catholic mass under authentic Christian Democratic leadership in the day to day political struggle. The danger is that the electorate will secede in large numbers if the party is too faithful to its inspiration or too militant—or else that the party itself will become conservative in order to accommodate its Catholic supporters. Both eventualities have actually occurred to an extent without fully resolving the problem . . ."

THE REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA
By Francis Houtart

"Although political upheavals take place there with a few pistol shots and the outburst of an occasional cannon, the major revolution in Latin America is developing in silence . . . Economic factors are the basis for the transformation of this continent, just as they were the foundation for the transforming of Europe at the beginning of the industrial revolution."

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